

Stages of The Reunion

STAGE ONE - THE HONEYMOON

Characterized by euphoria, joy and a sense of being on top of the world. Effort made by parties to find similarity and common interests. Much time is spent together in an effort to catch up on each other's lives; exchanges of pictures, letters and gifts; preoccupation with the other party. Minor negotiations about relationship, such as what to call birth relatives.

STAGE TWO - TIME OUT

One party may pull back to evaluate and process events. The honeymoon is over. The other party may feel confused when this occurs. Birth relatives may feel hurt, angry, frustrated and frightened of the adoptee, so pulls back. The adoptee may feel rejected by the birth relative if he/she pulls back. Problems in the relationship may develop at this time due to the lack of understanding of the emotional issues that surface during the search process. Society has few role models for this experience. Parties may need help to resolve the situation.

STAGE THREE - SHOW DOWN

Confrontation between the parties may happen. Issues will surface that will address the status of the relationship and its future development. If the birth relative initiates confrontation, she/he may fear the loss of the adoptee. The bond is fragile and the biological tie may not feel/be strong enough to ensure the outcome. If the adoptee confronts the birth relative, she/he may fear being rejected by the birth relative.

STAGE FOUR - DISENGAGEMENT OR SOLIDIFICATION

In this stage, disengagement is characterized by either the adoptee or the birth relative pulling back and away from the other party. Disengagement can be extremely painful for either party. Feelings of anger, loss and rejection are typical. This stage can occur if expectations are too rigid and differences between parties are just too great.

Solidification is characterized by continuing and sometimes earnest negotiations between all parties. Roles, differences and issues continue to be worked out, but the relationship is more solid and settled because agreement has been reached in many areas. Renegotiations occur as life changes and growth takes place and new relationship roles emerge.

Modified from a document found on the Internet.